AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #997

"The Fury of Aang"

Part 1
Show #210
BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER TEN: "The Library"

Written by
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Part 2
Show #211
BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER ELEVEN: "The Desert"

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ACT ONE

EXT. GOLDEN PRAIRIE - MID-DAY

It's a hot day, as Aang and friends stare out over the prairie. The plains are vast, flat, and covered with holes.

SOKKA
What's out here?

TOPH
A lot, actually. There's hundreds of little--

AANG
Shh! I know you can see underground, but don't ruin the surprise.

Toph shrugs. Aang plucks a reed from the ground.

AANG (cont'd)
Just watch...

Aang pokes a few holes in the reed and blows a NOTE. A second later, a SINGING GROUNDHOG pokes its head out of a hole, and SINGS the same note in response.

AANG (cont'd)
(GIGGLES) Yeah!

He plays a different NOTE, and another groundhog pokes its head up from a different hole and SINGS the new note.

AANG (cont'd)
I'm putting an orchestra together!

SOKKA
Orchestra, huh? Well la-dee-da.

SINGING GROUNDHOG #1
La!

SINGING GROUNDHOG #2
Dee!

SINGING GROUNDHOG #3
Da!

Aang plays a series of VARIOUS NOTES on the reed, causing the groundhogs to pop up and SING in a comically hurried fashion. Aang plays a delightful melody, as the groundhogs respond with a slight delay, creating a "singing a round"-like effect.

Katara CLAPS and joins in Aang's enjoyment of the singing groundhogs. Sokka plugs the reed with his finger, silencing Aang.

SOKKA
This is great and all, but don't we have more important things to worry about? We should be making plans.

TOPH
We did make plans. We're all picking mini-vacations.

SOKKA
There's no time for vacations.

AANG
I'm learning the elements as fast as I can. I practice hard every day with Toph and Katara -- I've been training my arrow off!

KATARA
Yeah, what's wrong with having a little fun in our down time?

SOKKA
Even if you do master all of the elements, then what? It's not like we have a map of the Fire Nation. Should we just head West until we reach the Fire Lord's house? "Knock, knock! Hello, Fire Lord? Anybody home?" I don't think so. We need some intelligence if we're going to win this war.

Aang blows another NOTE on his reed, prompting a singing groundhog to pop up right underneath Sokka. With Sokka now sitting on the animal's head, it SINGS the note back to Aang. Aang sees that Sokka is not amused.

AANG
Alright. We'll finish our vacations, and then we'll look for Sokka's "intelligence".

Sokka frowns at Aang's veiled insult. Aang hands Katara a map the kids have been using.

AANG (cont'd)
Your turn, Katara. Where would you like to go on your mini-vacation?

She looks at the map.

KATARA
How about the Misty Palms Oasis? That sounds refreshing.

AANG
Oh, yeah! I've been there -- it's a pristine natural ice spring, and I usually don't use the word pristine. It's one of nature's wonders.

EXT. MISTY PALMS OASIS - LATER THAT AFTERNOON

The sun beats down as the kids climb down from Appa. Instead of a natural wonder, they are faced with a tacky cantina called the Misty Palms Oasis.

AANG
Must've changed ownership since I was here. (CHUCKLES SHEEPISHLY)

He smiles at Katara, who seems displeased. He ties Appa's reigns to a post. The kids walk into the cantina, passing by a group of raggedy desert-dwellers (the SANDBENDERS). Sokka eyes one of them, who glares at him and spits some strange substance onto the ground, right in front of Sokka's feet. Katara grabs her brother by the arm and leads him inside before the situation escalates.

INT. MISTY PALMS OASIS - CONTINUOUS

The kids enter to see a busy watering hole crowded with travelers and merchants. Sokka sees a SERVER with dual katanas. The man quickly chops up a block of ice with some tropical fruits, and pours it into a glass, creating a frozen fruit beverage for a happy customer. Sokka looks at it, longingly.

SOKKA
I don't see anything wrong with having one of those fruity beverages while we plan our strategy. Excuse me.

Suddenly, PROFESSOR ZEI, an Avatar version of Indiana Jones, turns around to find himself face to face with Aang. (NOTE: If Indian Jones is 70%/30% adventurer/scholar, then this guy is 30%/70%, more emphasis on scholar.)

PROFESSOR ZEI
(GASP)

He startles, and spills his frozen fruit beverage all over the Avatar.

AANG
No worries. I clean up easy.

WHOOSH! Aang clears the spill off himself with Airbending.

PROFESSOR ZEI
You're a living relic!

AANG
Thanks. I try.

PROFESSOR ZEI
(hushed tone)
An Air Nomad... right in front of me.

Professor Zei bows.

PROFESSOR ZEI (cont'd)
Professor Zei, Head of Anthropology at Ba Sing Se University. Tell me, which of the Air Temples do you hail from?

AANG
The Southern Temple.

Zei clasps his hands together in bliss.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Oh splendid! Tell me -- what was the primary agricultural product of your people?

AANG
Uh... are fruit pies an agricultural product?

PROFESSOR ZEI
(deadly serious)
Truly fascinating. That's one for the journal.

He reaches for a quill at the bar and quickly jots something down on a parchment.

SOKKA
So, Professor -- you're obviously a well-traveled guy.
(MORE)

SOKKA (cont'd)
Do you have a more current map? Ours seems to be a little dated.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Certainly.

Sokka opens the guy's map.

SOKKA
(a bit disappointed)
What, no Fire Nation? Doesn't anybody have a good map of that place?

Katara notices vast expanses of the Earth Kingdom desert marked with dotted lines.

KATARA
You've made a lot of trips into the desert.

PROFESSOR ZEI
All in vain, I'm afraid. I've found lost civilizations all over the Earth Kingdom, but I haven't managed to find the crown jewel -- Wan Shi Tong's (PRON: wahn she tong) Library.

TOPH
You've spent years walking through the desert... to find some guy's library?

PROFESSOR ZEI
This library is more valuable than gold, little lady. It's said to contain a vast collection of knowledge. And knowledge is priceless!

TOPH
Mm. Sounds like good times.

PROFESSOR ZEI
(oblivious)
Oh, it is. According to legend, it was built by the great Knowledge Spirit, Wan Shi Tong, with the help of his foxy knowledge seekers.

SOKKA
(intrigued)
Oh... so this spirit has attractive assistants, huh?

KATARA
I think he means they look like actual foxes, Sokka.

PROFESSOR ZEI
You're both right! Handsome little creatures. Wan Shi Tong and his knowledge seekers collected books from all over the world and put them on display for mankind to read, so that we might better ourselves.

SOKKA
If this place has books from all over the world, you think they've got info on the Fire Nation? A map, maybe?

PROFESSOR ZEI
I wouldn't know, but if such a thing exists, it's in Wan Shi Tong's library.

SOKKA
Then it's settled. Aang, I do believe it's my turn: I'd like to spend my vacation at the library!

Toph and Aang EXHALE loudly, signaling their disapproval.

TOPH
Hey, what about me? When do I get to pick?

SOKKA
You got to work here a little longer before you qualify for vacation time.

Sokka smiles and folds his arms with satisfaction.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Of course, there is the matter of finding it. I've made several trips into the Si Wong Desert, and almost died each time. I'm afraid that desert's impossible to cross.

Sokka smiles smugly, slightly smirking slyly.

SOKKA
Professor, would you like to see our sky bison?

Zei shoots up into the air in excitement.

PROFESSOR ZEI
A sky bison? You actually have one?!

EXT. MISTY PALMS OASIS - MOMENTS LATER

As the gang exits the cantina with Professor Zei, they notice several of the Sandbenders are now standing a little too close to Appa, giving him a once-over.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Sandbenders! Shoo! Away from the bison!

He runs out the door of the cantina, yelling at the Sandbenders.

EXT. SKY - APPA'S BACK - MINUTES LATER

The kids and the professor are now soaring above the desert. Below them is miles and miles of barren sand, but the professor is happy enough just to be on a sky bison.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Tell me, sky bison -- are you the last of your breed?

APPA
(BELLOWS)

PROFESSOR ZEI
Delightful! I only wish I spoke his tongue -- oh, the stories this beast could tell!

MOMO
(CHITTER AT LENGTH AS IF TELLING A STORY)

PROFESSOR ZEI
Shush, chatty monkey.

Aang looks at a drawing of the library -- even in the artist's rendering, it's an ornate palace whose elegance is on par with the Taj Mahal.

AANG
Wow. Shouldn't be too hard to find a place like this out here...

Sokka and Momo look down below, seeing nothing but sand.

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT SKY - LATER

The light of the sun is beginning to refract on the surface of the hot sand below. Still no library in sight.

TOPH
(testy)
Aw, does this place even exist?

PROFESSOR ZEI
Some say it doesn't.

TOPH
Shouldn't you have mentioned that before?

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT SKY - LATER

Everyone is now beginning to grow restless, with the library nowhere to be found. Suddenly, Toph points excitedly.

TOPH
There it is!

Everyone rushes to look to where she is pointing, then realizes they've been duped.

TOPH (cont'd)
That's what it will sound like when one of you spots it.

Everyone glares at Toph incredulously. Katara looks out over the horizon.

KATARA
It shouldn't be this hard to spot a giant ornate building from the air.

Suddenly, Sokka spots something below (with his spyglass?).

SOKKA
Down there. What's that?

Everyone looks down to see a little spire sticking out of the sand below. (NOTE: the protruding portion of the spire needs to be nondescript enough not to be immediately recognizable as part of the library.) Aang takes Appa down for a look...

EXT. DESERT GROUND - SECONDS LATER

Appa touches down. Nearby, several buzzard-wasps are feeding on an animal carcass. (NOTE: storyboard tastefully! Perhaps little bibs on the buzzards?) The kids cautiously avoid the creatures, and keep walking to the strange structure.

KATARA
Forget it. It's obviously not what we're looking for. The building in this drawing is enormous.

The group sees a small, ethereal fox-like creature coming toward the spire, carrying a scroll in its mouth.

SOKKA
What kind of animal is that?

The kids and the professor watch in awe as the ghostly fox glides straight up the side of the tower and enters through an open window at the top.

PROFESSOR ZEI
I think that was one of the knowledge seekers. We must be close to the library!

SOKKA
No -- this <u>is</u> the library. Look!

He points to the drawing, at the tall spire atop the library.

SOKKA (cont'd)
It's completely buried.

<u>END OF ACT ONE</u>

ACT TWO

EXT. DESERT GROUND - CONTINUOUS

The kids stand around the mysterious spire with the professor, who is very upset.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Buried?! My life's ambition is now full of sand!
(suddenly calm)
Well, time to start excavating.

He pulls out a tiny pick and a tiny brush. Toph approaches the tower, and does a little "sonar" style Earthbending move.

TOPH
Actually, that won't be necessary. The inside seems to be completely intact... and it's huge.

SOKKA
That fox thingy went in through a window. I say we climb up there and give it a look...

TOPH
I say you guys go ahead without me.

KATARA
You've got something against libraries?

TOPH
(shrugs)
I've held books before, and I got to tell you, they don't exactly do it for me.

KATARA
Oh right. Sorry.

TOPH
(cheerful)
Let me know if they have something you can listen to.

Sokka ties a rope onto his boomerang and throws it around the top of the spire.

APPA
(BELLOWS ANXIOUSLY)

AANG
(comforting Appa)
Don't worry, buddy. I'm not making you go underground ever again. You can stay out here with Toph.

Appa looks at Toph.

TOPH
(to Appa, super casual)
What's up.

INT. LIBRARY - SECONDS LATER

With Sokka's boomerang-rope securely fastened at the top of the spire, the kids descend into the main corridor of the library. They gaze around in disbelief at otherworldly designs around them that could only have been made by spirit artisans.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Oh, it's breathtaking! The spirits spared no expense in designing this place. Look at those beautiful buttresses!

AANG/SOKKA
(SNICKERING)

PROFESSOR ZEI
What's funny?

AANG
Nothing, we just like architecture.

PROFESSOR ZEI
As do I!

They all come to the bottom of the rope and look up at the ceiling -- it's a large mosaic of an owl.

PROFESSOR ZEI (cont'd)
My word! The exquisite mosaic handiwork of this tile-rendered avian symbol...

Everyone looks at the professor a bit confused.

PROFESSOR ZEI (cont'd)
(realizing)
Er... nice owl.

Suddenly, they hear a noise approaching -- a LOUD RUSTLING noise. Everyone ducks behind a large stack of books. They listen in suspense as the rustling grows nearer, and louder. The kids peek out through the cracks between the book stacks to see what's making the rustling -- it appears to be... feathers? Aang peers through his peephole, rather puzzled. Suddenly, a large owl-like face appears in front of him, with its eye peering right back Aang.

CREATURE
I know you're back there.

The kids look at each other, then to the professor, who is trembling with excitement. After a tense BEAT, he jumps up to greet the creature.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Hello, I'm Professor Zei, Head of Anthropology at Ba Sing Se University.

He bows to the owl. Seeing they've been discovered, the kids come out of hiding. Before them stands the KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT -- a bizarre owl spirit who stands as tall as a large man. He cocks his head sideways, studying his trespassers.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
You should leave the way you came... unless you want to become a STUFFED "head of anthropology."

He motions to an exotic array of taxidermied heads. The professor cowers. Sokka steps up and takes charge.

SOKKA
Are you the spirit who brought this library to the physical world?

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Indeed, I am Wan Shi Tong, "he who knows ten thousand things". And you are obviously humans, which, by the way, are no longer permitted in my study.

AANG
What do you have against humans?

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
(GUFFAW) Humans only bother learning things to get the edge on other humans.
(MORE)

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT (cont'd)
Like that Firebender who came to this place a few years ago, looking to destroy his enemy...

INSERT SHOT of Zhao in the library.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT (cont'd)
(to kids)
So who are you trying to destroy?

SOKKA
(covering badly)
What? No... no destroying. We're not into that.

Wan Shi Tong thrusts his beak into Sokka's face, staring deep into his soul.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Then why have you come here?

SOKKA
Um... knowledge for knowledge's sake?

A Beat.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
If you're going to lie to an all-knowing spirit being, you should at least put some effort into it.

SOKKA
I'm not lying... I'm here with the Avatar, and he's the bridge between our worlds -- he'll vouch for me.

Sokka sticks a sharp elbow in Aang's ribs.

AANG
(pressured)
Uh... yeah, I'll vouch. We will not abuse the knowledge in your library, good spirit. You have my word.

The owl considers for a beat as he scrutinizes Aang.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Very well. I'll let you peruse my vast collection.

Everyone looks relieved.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT (cont'd)
On one condition...

Everyone tenses up again.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT (cont'd)
To prove your worth as scholars, you have to contribute some worthwhile knowledge.

He turns to the professor.

PROFESSOR ZEI
Please accept this tome as a donation to your library.

He hands the spirit an old, rare tome. Wan Shi Tong's eyes widen. This obviously pleases him.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
First edition, very nice.

The spirit turns to Katara, expecting a similar donation. She gives him one of her Waterbending scrolls.

KATARA
I have an authentic Waterbending scroll.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Oh, these illustrations are quite stylish.

Satisfied, Wan Shi Tong turns to Aang, who feels around in his pockets.

AANG
Uh... Ooh! I know!

He pulls out a piece of parchment. The Knowledge Spirit unrolls it to see that it's a wanted poster of Aang.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
(less enthused)
I suppose that counts.

He turns to Sokka.

SOKKA
Oh, great spirit... check this out--

Sokka pulls out a piece of twine and ties an elaborate knot.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Ta-da. It's a special knot. That counts as knowledge.

The knowledge spirit glares at him for a beat.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
(SIGHS) You're not very bright, are you?
(then, giving permission)
Enjoy the library.

Sokka looks irked. The spirit takes the knot from him and walks off.

SOKKA
(narrowing eyes, sotto)
Bright enough to fool you...

EXT. DESERT GROUND - LIBRARY SPIRE - SUNSET

Toph is now having an awkward moment with Appa, trying really hard to make conversation.

TOPH
So... You like flyin'? (LONG AWKWARD BEAT) Of course, I'm more comfortable on the ground where I can see. I don't "see" the way you do; I feel the vibrations in the ground with my feet. But this sand is so loose and shifty...

We see her shift some sand around with her feet.

TOPH (cont'd)
It makes everything look fuzzy.

APPA
(BELLOWS)

TOPH
Not that there's anything wrong with fuzzy.

INT. LIBRARY STUDY ROOM - LATER

The kids and the professor are now browsing through books from Wan Shi Tong's library. Aang is reading a book about the ancient lion-turtles.

AANG
Hey look at these weird lion-turtle things.

SOKKA
(shrugs)
I've seen weirder.

Katara is reading from a book about past Avatars.

KATARA
Aang, did you know in a past life you were left-handed?

AANG
(smiling)
I always knew I was special.

Sokka finds an old piece of parchment, preserved in a glass case. He reads from it.

SOKKA
"The Darkest Day in Fire Nation History"... It's got a date at the top. But it doesn't say anything else.

INT. LIBRARY - LONG CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Sokka exits the study and walks down the long hall of books, searching for something. Aang and Katara follow him.

AANG
Sokka? Where are you going?

SOKKA
I want to know what happened to the Fire Nation on their darkest day -- this could be promising.

INT. LIBRARY - DAMAGED CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Sokka rounds another corner at the end of a long shelf of books. He glances at a directory in the hall.

SOKKA
The information on the Fire Nation should be right up here...

Then, he stops dead in his tracks and reacts in shock. His friends catch up with him to see that an entire wing of the library has been obliterated by fire damage. Absolutely nothing -- shelves or books -- remains.

AANG
Firebenders.

KATARA
They destroyed everything having to do with the Fire Nation.

SOKKA
That's so unfair! Just when I think I'm one step ahead of the Fire Nation, it turns out they beat us here a long time ago.

Katara and Aang pat Sokka on the shoulder, comfortingly.

SOKKA (cont'd)
I need to know what happened on the "Darkest Day."

Suddenly, one of the seekers approaches Sokka, beckoning him.

SOKKA (cont'd)
(uncomfortable)
Hello... little weird fox guy...

PROFESSOR ZEI
Seems it's trying to assist you.

It glides across the room and looks back at Sokka.

SOKKA
(apprehensive to seeker)
Um... Sure, I, guess I'll follow you...

Sokka motions for his friends to come with him. They follow the seeker across the damaged chamber, back into the long corridor of the library.

INT. LIBRARY - LONG CORRIDOR

The kids and the professor follow the seeker across the corridor. The seeker stops at a set of drawers. It pulls one of the drawers open with its teeth. Suddenly, a SECRET DOOR opens, and the seeker leads the kids inside.

INT. LIBRARY - PLANETARY CALENDAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room appears to be a large, domed planetarium, elegantly crafted from bronze, jade, and gold.

PROFESSOR ZEI
This room is a true marvel -- a mechanical wonder! It's a planetarium that shows the heavens moving.

SOKKA
Uh, this is beautiful, but... how is it helpful?

Katara is looking at a set of three dials on a crude control panel at one end of the chamber. (These are not high-tech; see "Myst" and "The Dark Crystal".)

KATARA
Maybe these dials represent dates and times. Sokka, try entering the date from that parchment you took.

SOKKA
Shh! Katara!
(sotto, urgent)
Not in front of the fox. He's with the owl.

Katara looks at the seeker, who wags his little spirit tail innocently. Sokka discreetly takes the parchment out of his coat. He looks at it, then begins to turn the dials on the control panel to match the date. As he turns the controls, the room leaps to life: a projection "bulb" (a brightly glowing crystal) is uncovered in the center of the room. It projects stars onto the ceiling above. Mechanical parts begin to move too -- a large, physical model of the sun descends from the ceiling, also shining with the help of a crystal inside it. Models of planets orbit through the room (attached to poles, which are powered by gears). The kids and the professor release an astonished GASP at the magnificent representation of the cosmos.

AANG
Wow. I gotta hand it to you, Sokka... you picked the best mini-vacation, for sure.

Sokka finishes turning the dials. He seems unsatisfied.

KATARA
Hey wait, what happened to the sun?

AANG
Great. You must have broken it.

Sokka turns the dials a bit, changing the date -- this causes the sun to rise and set in the sky, shining on and off with day and night.

SOKKA
It's not broken.

He changes it back to the date on the parchment.

SOKKA (cont'd)
The sun is behind the moon -- it's a solar eclipse. It's literally the darkest day in Fire Nation history... now I get it! Something awful happened on that day -- I don't know what, but I do know why. Firebenders lose their bending during a solar eclipse!

Sokka sees that he is now grabbing Aang by the shoulders and shaking him. He realizes what he's doing and lets go.

SOKKA (cont'd)
(to Aang)
Sorry.

KATARA
That makes sense! I mean, think of what the lunar eclipse at the North Pole did to the Waterbenders... this is huge.

Sokka sees the seeker, who is still begging.

SOKKA
Fine, you earned it.

Sokka tosses the spirit a piece of meat from his satchel. It gobbles up the treat and glides away.

SOKKA (CONT'D) (cont'd)
We've got to get this information to the Earth King at Ba Sing Se. We'll wait for the next eclipse, then we'll invade the Fire Nation when they're totally helpless! The Fire Lord is going down!

Sokka realizes everyone is motioning for him to shut up. Wan Shi Tong is standing right behind him with a very cross expression.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Mortals are so predictable. And such terrible liars.

Off Sokka's terrified GULP...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. LIBRARY - PLANETARY CALENDAR ROOM

The kids look terrified as the Knowledge Spirit confronts them.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
You betrayed my trust. From the beginning you intended to misuse this knowledge for evil purposes!

SOKKA
You don't understand -- if anyone's evil, it's the Fire Nation. You saw what they did to your library -- they're destructive and dangerous. We need this information!

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
You think you're the first person to believe their war was justified? Countless others before you have come here, seeking weapons or weaknesses or battle strategies.

AANG
(pleading)
We had no choice. Please, we're just desperate to protect the people we love.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
And now, I'm going to protect what I love...

He begins to flap his wings ferociously, and the walls of the library begin to tremble.

AANG
What are you doing?!

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
I'm taking my knowledge back. No one will ever abuse it again!

Sand begins to leak into the room.

KATARA
He's sinking the building! We've got to get out of here!

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
I'm afraid I can't allow that either. You already know too much.

And with that, Wan Shi Tong begins to transform into a much more menacing owl-dragon version of himself. He begins attacking the kids, slashing at them with his razor-sharp beak and talons. The tremors grow stronger, and more sand begins to gush into the library. The kids run for their lives.

EXT. DESERT GROUND - LIBRARY SPIRE - EVENING

That moment, Toph is sitting on the sand, attempting to nap. Suddenly, Appa sees the library tower sink into the ground several feet.

APPA
(WORRIED BELLOW)

TOPH
I already told you, I don't want to snuggle.

At that moment, we see some sands shifting beneath her feet as it begins sloughing into the library. She puts her hands on the tower to feel what's going on.

TOPH (cont'd)
Library's sinking, LIBRARY'S SINKING!

Toph leaps into action, performing an energetic Earthbending maneuver that stops the sinking tower. She struggles to hold it in place.

INT. LIBRARY - LONG CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The kids peel out of the planetarium and run away from the giant owl-dragon, who is now tearing through stacks of books to get to the trespassers.

PROFESSOR ZEI
(YELPS) Great Knowledge Spirit -- I beg you: do NOT destroy your vast collection of priceless tomes!

The owl swats at the professor, but Aang Airbends him out of the way, just in time to avoid a nasty swipe of the spirit's claw.

AANG
We've got to get back to the surface!

Aang does another Airbending move knocking over a mammoth bookcase (or two), temporarily blocking the corridor and stalling the owl-dragon. The kids run for it. Suddenly, Sokka stops and ducks behind a shelf. Katara and Aang notice his hesitation. (IMPORTANT: The professor should quietly disappear here.)

KATARA
Sokka! Let's go!

SOKKA
But we still don't know when the next eclipse is going to happen!

KATARA
Don't be stupid! We'll find out later!

SOKKA
No we won't! If we leave this place, we'll never get the information. Aang, come with me to the planetarium. I need cover. Katara, take Momo and get out of here!

KATARA
But--

The owl-dragon BURSTS through the bookcase and into the corridor.

SOKKA
Go!

With Momo on her shoulders, Katara sprints toward the exit. The Knowledge Spirit sees her, and gives chase. Aang and Sokka go in the opposite direction.

KATARA
Hurry, Sokka!

EXT. DESERT - CONTINUOUS

Toph is still struggling to hold up the sinking library. Appa grows uneasy as something approaches on the horizon.

APPA
(GUTTURAL GROWL)

TOPH
What is it now?

Before we can get a closer look at the approaching party, a massive sandstorm begins to whip up around Toph and Appa. The storm quickly swells to an unbearable intensity.

TOPH (cont'd)
Who's there?!

Through the swirling sand, we can barely make out the figures of men riding some sort of sailing vehicle. The mysterious riders circle Toph and Appa, bending the sand into a fury. Toph continues to focus all her strength on holding up the library.

INT. LIBRARY - LONG CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Sokka and Aang sprint toward the end of the hall toward the secret door to the planetarium.

AANG
Why are we doing this?

SOKKA
Because if this calendar can tell us about eclipses in the past, then maybe it can project when the next one will be!

AANG
You can't possibly check every single date.

SOKKA
I don't have to. We just need to check every date before Sozin's comet arrives. Because after that... well, try not to think about that.

Sokka pulls the secret drawer that opens the door, and he and Aang dart inside.

INT. LIBRARY - PLANETARY CALENDAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sokka runs to the dials and starts spinning them rapidly. The stars and planets in the room begin to rotate, wax, and wane with the passing of each day. Sokka and Aang watch the sun, anxiously, rooting for the moon to pass in front of it.

AANG
Come on, eclipse.

Finally, he comes to a day where the crystal in the model sun is not shining.

SOKKA
That's it! The solar eclipse!
It's just a few months away...

Sokka looks back at the dials, and quickly scrawls something down as if writing down the date.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Got it. Now let's get to Ba Sing
Se!

EXT. DESERT GROUND - LIBRARY SPIRE - CONTINUOUS

The sandbenders are now fighting harder than ever, throwing ropes over Appa like Lilliputians. They pull the ropes tight, subduing him.

TOPH
(bravado)
Don't make me put this down!

We can barely see Appa through the sand, but it looks like he's in a struggle.

APPA
(BELLOWS FOR HELP)

With anguish visible on her face, Toph lets go of the library spire. It begins slipping into the sand. Toph acts quickly and tries to rescue Appa with an Earthbending attack, but her blow dissipates in the soft sand. She turns back to the spire, which is now disappearing beneath the sand! Toph digs it out with her bending and slowly drags it back up. Behind her, we see the attackers resume their assault on Appa. For the first time, we clearly see that it's the sandbenders from the cantina.

APPA (cont'd)
(BELLOWS FOR HELP)

ON TOPH, who is losing her grip on the sinking spire.

TOPH
No! Stop sinking!

APPA
(BELLOWS FOR HIS LIFE)

TOPH
No!

She turns, releasing the library and delivering a hard but sloppy blow at the sandbenders. The library begins to sink more quickly beneath the sand. Toph has to choose. Biting her lip, she turns away from Appa and concentrates on bending the library back out of the sand.

TOPH (cont'd)
(sotto)
I'm sorry, Appa.

INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Katara is now hiding from the knowledge spirit in the book stacks. She hides behind a marble column, panting heavily. She looks to her side, where Momo is hiding behind another column, also panting heavily. They hear the approaching RUSTLE of the owl's feathers. Katara looks up at the spire that the kids climbed down through -- it's right across from her, and the rope they used is still fastened.

ON WAN SHI TONG, who is stalking them through the aisles of books. He sees Momo's tail sticking out from behind the marble column.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
At least I'll have one specimen to add to my collection.

MOMO
(SHRIEKS)

The knowledge spirit makes a dive for Momo, but the lemur dodges his attack and flees. Katara rushes to Momo's aid, facing the giant owl-dragon. She pulls out her water pouch, preparing to bend from it.

KNOWLEDGE SPIRIT
Your Waterbending won't do you much good here.
(demonstrating stances)
I've studied Northern Water style, Southern Water style, even "Foggy Swamp style."

Suddenly, Sokka comes speeding down the corridor with Aang on his glider, and SMACKS the owl in the back of the head with his club.

SOKKA
That's called Sokka style! Learn it!

The spirit is staggered just long enough for Aang to scoop up Katara and Momo. They all glide up to the entry spire together, then...

SOKKA (cont'd)
Wait.

He looks down at the snarling owl monster, then down at the bookshelves, where the professor is still staring at a row of books.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Professor! Let's go!

PROFESSOR ZEI
I'm not leaving. I can't. I've spent too long trying to find this place. There's not another collection of knowledge like this on earth.
(eerily peaceful)
I could spend an eternity in here...

KATARA
(urging her friends)
Just go!

Sokka scampers up the rope and helps his friends to safety.

EXT. DESERT GROUND - LIBRARY SPIRE - SPIRE

The gang climbs out of the window in the spire and jumps to the ground a few feet below. Toph, exhausted from holding up the library, releases it, and it disappears beneath the surface.

SOKKA
We got it! There's a solar eclipse coming. The Fire Nation's in trouble now!

He notices that Toph is not sharing his joy. Aang looks around at the empty desert -- suddenly, it dawns on him...

AANG
Where's Appa?

Unable to speak, Toph just shakes her head "NO" and buries her face in her hands.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The kids stand at the scene of the sunken library from the previous episode. Momo flitters around, looking for his big furry friend. Aang looks around, frustrated and angry, like he might start crying. He turns to Toph.

AANG
How could you let them take Appa? Why didn't you stop them?!

TOPH
I couldn't -- the library was sinking -- you guys were still inside and-

AANG
You could have come to get us! I could have saved him!

TOPH
I can hardly feel any vibrations out here! The Sandbenders snuck up on me and there wasn't time for-

AANG
You just didn't care! You never liked Appa! You wanted him gone!

Katara turns to Aang, trying to comfort him, but sternly.

KATARA
Aang, stop it. You know Toph did all she could. She saved our lives!

Sokka looks over the desert, worried.

SOKKA
Who's gonna save our lives now? We'll never make it out of here.

AANG
That's all any of you guys care about -- yourselves. You don't care whether Appa is okay or not.

KATARA
We're all concerned, but we can't afford to be fighting now.

Aang whips out his glider.

AANG
I'm going after Appa.
(to Toph)

KATARA
Aang! Wait!

It's too late. He's gone. They all look around at the barren landscape.

KATARA (cont'd)
We better start walking. We're the only people who know about the solar eclipse. We have to get that information to Ba Sing Se.

SOKKA
You think if we dig out the giant owl he'll give us a ride?

They ignore him and start walking in the direction Aang flew.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Uncle and Zuko travel through some woods, riding their ostrich horse. . Uncle is still weakened from his encounter with Azula in 2.08, and winces or moans with each bounce of the trotting ostrich horse.

UNCLE
Ow... oh... ew... oh!

Zuko turns around to look at Uncle.

ZUKO
Maybe we should make camp.

UNCLE
No please, don't stop just for me.
(LONG PAINFUL GROAN)

Zuko stops the horse. He jumps off and puts down his pack. Uncle gratefully plops down on the ground to rest. Zuko starts to break out some camping supplies when they hear a rustling in the brush around them. Zuko jumps up, ready to face whoever is on their trail. Uncle sighs.

UNCLE (cont'd)
What now?

The Rough Rhinos ride into the clearing. As Zuko is poised for a fight, Uncle waves him off. Uncle slowly lifts himself up and sees Colonel Mongke. He smiles.

UNCLE (cont'd)
Colonel Mongke? What a pleasant surprise.

Mongke looks at them sternly.

COLONEL MONGKE
If you're surprised we're here, then the Dragon of the West has lost a few steps.

The Rough Rhinos draw their weapons and are poised for a fight. (The following conversation should play with a hint of irony and tension.)

ZUKO
(to Uncle)
You know these guys?

UNCLE
Sure, Colonel Mongke and the Rough Rhinos are legendary. Each one is a different kind of weapons specialist. They are also a very capable singing group.

COLONEL MONGKE
(threatening)
We're not here to give a concert. We're here to apprehend fugitives.

Uncle takes some deep breaths, steadying himself.

UNCLE
Would you like some tea first? I'd love some. How about you, Kachi? I make you as a jasmine man, am I right?

He smiles at Kachi, who just glares at him. Uncle continues smiling at the rest of the Rhinos, taking meditative breaths as he slowly speaks, regaining his strength.

COLONEL MONGKE
Enough stalling.
(to his men)
Round 'em up!

The Rough Rhinos spring into action, but thanks to his stalling tactics, Uncle is ready to fight alongside Zuko. Vachir throws a smoke bomb at the duo which Uncle bats away with his walking stick, hitting Yeh-Lu in the chest with it. The angered archer fires a shot at Zuko, who catches the arrow between his hands. Zuko Firebends back at him, making his rhino buck and careen into the others. Uncle uses the distraction to grab Zuko. They jump on the ostrich-horse and escape.

UNCLE
It's nice to see old friends.

ZUKO
Too bad you don't have any old friends that don't want to attack you.

UNCLE
(pondering)
Hmm... old friends that don't want to attack me...

They hustle through the woods as Uncle ponders.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Katara, Sokka, and Toph trudge through the sand under the blazing sun. Momo rides on Sokka's shoulder, and Sokka grabs him, puts him on his head, and extends Momo's wings so that he has some shade. Toph stumbles over a sand hill into Sokka.

SOKKA
Can't you watch where you're-

TOPH
(bitter)
No.

Sokka nods.

SOKKA
Right. Sorry.

KATARA
Come on, guys, we've got to stick together.

Sokka peels Toph off him and sets her to rights.

SOKKA
If I sweat any more I don't think sticking together will be a problem.

TOPH
Katara, can I have some water?

Katara pulls out her bag of bending water.

KATARA
Okay, but we've got to try to conserve it.

Toph and Sokka drink. Sokka swishes the water around in his mouth and makes a yucky face.

SOKKA
We're drinking your bending water.
(smacking his mouth)
You used this on the swamp guy!

TOPH
It does taste swampy.

KATARA
I'm sorry, it's all we have.

SOKKA
(seeing something)
Not any more! Look!

He runs off toward a cactus patch growing near a dirt hill. Katara grabs Toph and escorts her after Sokka. Sokka pulls out his knife and cuts out a section of cactus.

KATARA
Sokka, wait! You shouldn't be eating strange plants.

SOKKA
There's water trapped inside these!

He sucks on the cactus piece and cuts off a little section for Momo, who shoves it in his mouth. He offers a piece to Katara, but she rejects it.

KATARA
I don't know...

Sokka shrugs.

SOKKA
Suit yourself. It's very thirst-quenching though...
(starting to act strange, pupils dilating)
Drink cactus juice, it'll quench you! Nothing's quenchier -- it's the quenchiest!

Katara, looking worried, takes away the cactus he was drinking.

KATARA
Okay, I think you've had enough.

Sokka stares at Toph.

SOKKA
Who lit Toph on fire?

Momo, whose pupils are also dilated, chitters insanely, then flies around in small circles before crashing to the ground.

MOMO
(CHITTERING)

TOPH
(oblivious)
Can I get some of that cactus?

KATARA
I don't think that's a good idea. Come on. We need to find Aang.

She picks up Momo, puts him on Sokka's shoulder, and grabs Sokka's hand. She goes over to Toph, points her in the right direction, and starts the group walking again.

SOKKA
How did we get out here in the middle of the ocean?

Katara sighs and leads the gang away.

EXT. DESERT SKY - DAY

Aang flies over the desert, searching desperately for any sign of Appa's trail. He blows the bison whistle.

AANG
Appa! Appa!

Nothing but the desert wind in response. Aang lands and searches the ground for tracks. Nothing. He stands up and looks around. Empty desert in all directions. Aang's lower lip trembles.

AANG (cont'd)
No!

He winds up in frustration, jumps into the air, and strikes the sandy earth with a massive, angry Airbending strike.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

As Katara, Sokka and Toph trudge along, they see what looks like a mushroom cloud rising from the sand.

KATARA
What is that?

TOPH
What? What is what?

Sokka and Momo stare at the mushroom cloud. They exchange worried looks.

SOKKA
It's a giant mushroom.
(suddenly happy)
Maybe it's friendly!

KATARA
Let's just keep moving.
(to herself)
I hope Aang's okay.

SOKKA
Friendly mushroom. Mushy giant friend.

Katara gets them walking again.

EXT. MISTY PALMS OASIS CANTINA - DAY

PULL BACK TO REVEAL-

Xin Fu and Master Yu standing at a nearby sign board covered with wanted posters. They talk to the SERVER who we saw dicing fruit in 2.10.

SERVER
Yeah, a little barefoot blind girl and her friends passed through here a few days ago.

MASTER YU
Did they give you any indication where they were headed?

SERVER
Maybe you could give me a little incentive?

He rubs his fingers together in the "give me money" gesture.

XIN FU
You suggesting I break your fingers?

The server quickly puts his fingers away.

SERVER
They went in the desert. Too bad there's almost no chance they survived.

XIN FU
That's okay, 'cause she's wanted dead or alive.

The server heads back inside.

MASTER YU
No she's not. I'm certain her father wants her alive.

Xin Fu shrugs.

XIN FU
(noticing something)
Hey, look! Fire Nation wanted posters!

He points to wanted posters of Uncle and Zuko displayed on the board.

MASTER YU
So?

XIN FU
So, look who's here.

He points to Uncle and Zuko entering the cantina.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Katara, Sokka, and Toph continue walking. Aang comes gliding up and lands. He hangs his head. Katara walks over to him and puts a hand on his shoulder.

KATARA
I'm sorry, Aang.

Aang plops down in the sand, ignoring her.

KATARA (cont'd)
I know it's hard for you right now, but we need to focus on getting out of here.

Aang shrugs sadly, utterly defeated.

AANG
What's the difference? We won't survive without Appa. We all know it.

Katara tries to force some hope on him.

KATARA
Come on, Aang, we can do this if we work together. Right Toph?

Toph shrugs.

TOPH
As far as I can feel, we're trapped in a giant bowl of sand pudding. I got nothing.

KATARA
Sokka? Any ideas how to find Ba Sing Se?

Sokka and Momo are staring up at the sky.

SOKKA
Why don't we ask the circle birds?

Katara looks up and sees two ugly BUZZARD-WASPS circling lazily overhead, just waiting for them to die. Katara looks back at her group -- Aang is hopeless, Toph nearly helpless, and Sokka out of his mind -- they're a mess. She realizes that either she keeps the gang moving or they're all dead.

KATARA
We're getting out of this desert
and we're going to do it together.
Aang get up. Everybody hold hands.

She grabs Aang's hand, Aang grabs Toph's hand, Toph grabs Sokka's hand and Sokka drags Momo behind, half flying.

KATARA (cont'd)
We can do this. We have to.

She looks over her shoulder at the birds as she leads the group into the desolate wasteland.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. DESERT - SUNDOWN

The kids trudge through the desert, exhausted, as the sun starts to go down. Katara looks around at her weary compatriots and stops.

KATARA
I think we should stop for the night.

They all immediately drop to the ground.

TOPH
Is there any more water?

Katara holds up her water pouch. It's almost empty.

KATARA
This is the last of it. Everyone can have a little drink.

Momo grabs the pouch and squeezes it, causing the water to spill everywhere!

SOKKA
(freaking out)
Momo, no! You've killed us all!

KATARA
No he hasn't.

Katara easily bends the spilled water back into the pouch.

SOKKA
Oh, right. Bending.

She squeezes a little water into Momo's mouth and passes the pouch to Toph.

KATARA
Sokka, let me see the things you got from the library.

Sokka, still feeling the effects of the cactus juice, gets jumpy and suspicious.

SOKKA
What? I didn't steal anything! Who told you that?

SOKKA (cont'd)
(turning to Momo)
It was you! You ratted me out!

MOMO
(FRIGHTENED CHITTERING)

Katara rolls her eyes.

KATARA
Sokka, I was there.

She grabs Sokka's bag and starts pulling out charts and maps.

AANG
It doesn't matter. None of those will tell us where Appa is.

KATARA
No, but we can find out which way Ba Sing Se is.

She looks through the documents, then finds a star chart.

KATARA (cont'd)
We can use the stars to guide us. That way we can travel at night when it's cool and rest during the day.

She looks around at the group for some response to her plan, but everyone is zoned out. She sighs.

KATARA (cont'd)
Just try to get some sleep. We'll start again in a few hours.

Everyone lies down silently. Katara looks at them all, worried.

INT. MISTY PALMS OASIS CANTINA - NIGHT

Zuko and Uncle survey the crowd in the cantina. It's a mixed bag of travelers, many of them shady-looking characters.

ZUKO
No one here is going to help us. These people just look like filthy wanderers.

UNCLE
So do we.
(noticing something)
Ah. This is interesting.

He points to a corner where FUNG, a greasy little old man who wears a white lotus flower on his lapel, is setting up a Pai Sho game. Uncle smiles.

UNCLE (cont'd)
I think I've found our friend.

He starts over to Fung. Zuko grimaces.

ZUKO
You brought us here to gamble on Pai Sho?

UNCLE
I don't think this is a gamble.

As they walk over, we see Xin Fu and Master Yu sitting in a corner, watching. Xin Fu starts to get up.

XIN FU
Let's take them now.

Master Yu puts a hand on his shoulder, holding him back.

MASTER YU
This place is full of desperate characters. If they find out we're collecting a bounty, we might have to fight them all just to keep our prize. Patience.

Xin Fu slowly sits back down and they wait. Meanwhile, Uncle sits down at the Pai Sho table with Fung.

UNCLE
May I have this game?

Fung looks him over cautiously, then gestures for Uncle to sit down.

FUNG
The guest has the first move.

Uncle spreads out his tiles, then puts down the white lotus tile. Fung nods curiously.

FUNG (cont'd)
I see you favor the white lotus gambit. Not many still cling to the ancient ways.

Uncle nods and rubs his hands together in front of him.

UNCLE
Those who do can always find a friend.

Fung rubs his hands together like Uncle's mirror image.

FUNG
Then let us play.

Fung and Uncle quickly slam down piece after piece, looking like they're not so much playing a game as arranging the pieces on the board into a pre-ordained pattern. Zuko watches with growing curiosity. When Uncle and Fung finish, they reach across the board and give each other an elaborate secret handshake. Fung smiles.

FUNG (cont'd)
Welcome, brother. The White Lotus opens wide to those who know her secrets.

Zuko shakes his head, frustrated.

ZUKO
What are you old gas-bags talking about?

Uncle gives him a patronizing smile.

UNCLE
I always tried to tell you that Pai Sho is more than just a game.

Off in the corner, Xin Fu leaps up.

XIN FU
I'm not waiting all night for these geezers to finish yapping! It's over. You two fugitives are coming with me.

He strides over toward Zuko and Uncle. Master Yu sighs and follows. Zuko and Uncle immediately spot them and jump up to fight. There's a dramatic moment, as the four men face off. But before anything can get started, Fung jumps up and points at Uncle and Zuko.

FUNG
I knew it! You two are wanted criminals with a giant bounty on your heads!

Immediately, every person in the cantina turns to look at Zuko and Uncle. Zuko turns to Uncle, furious.

ZUKO
I thought you said he would help!

UNCLE
He is. Just watch.

Fung turns to Xin Fu and Master Yu.

FUNG
You think you're going to capture them and collect all that gold?

CANTINA GUY
Gold?

Now everyone in the cantina stares at Xin Fu and Master Yu, clearly hungry for a giant reward. Master Yu looks around at the greedy crowd. Many of the people in the cantina are starting to finger their weapons, ready to fight to claim Uncle and Zuko.

MASTER YU
Uh, maybe we shouldn't...

Xin Fu charges at Uncle, Zuko and Fung. As he does, everyone in the bar leaps forward to stop him and grab the fugitives. It's a massive bar brawl with overturned tables, broken bottles, the whole nine yards. In the midst of the action, Fung grabs Uncle and Zuko and hurries them out a back door. Master Yu sees them slipping away, but is too busy fighting off cantina patrons to follow.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Katara shakes the kids awake.

KATARA
Come on. Get up. We need to go.

As everyone wakes up, Toph smacks her dry mouth.

TOPH
Yesterday my mouth tasted like mud. Now it just tastes like sand.
(MORE)

TOPH (cont'd)
I never thought I'd miss the taste of mud so much.

Katara goes over to Aang and softly puts her hand on his shoulder.

AANG
I'm awake. I couldn't sleep.

KATARA
Well, we need to get moving if we want to get out of this sand pit.

Aang slowly sits up and looks at the moon. He gets an excited look on his face.

AANG
Appa!

They all look up. A dark shadow passes in front of the moon.

SOKKA
Appa! But why would Princess Yue need him? She's the moon. She flies by herself.

KATARA
It's just a cloud.

Aang sadly hangs his head. But Katara gets a hopeful look.

KATARA (cont'd)
Wait, a cloud! Here.

She hands him her water pouch.

KATARA (cont'd)
Fly up and bend the water from that cloud into my pouch.

Aang unenthusiastically takes the pouch, grabs his glider, and takes off. As the kids watch from the ground, Aang darts back and forth in front of the moon. We see the cloud that was there disappear. Aang heads back towards earth.

He lands and hands the pouch to Katara. She inspects it and finds that it's hardly been filled at all.

KATARA (cont'd)
Wow. There's hardly any in here.

Aang turns on her, angry.

AANG
I'm sorry, okay? It's a desert cloud. I did all I could. What's anyone else doing? What are you doing?

Katara looks hurt, but holds herself together for the team.

KATARA
Trying to keep everyone together. Let's just get moving.
(checking her star chart)
We need to head this direction.

She starts leading her group over a dune. As they walk, Toph stubs her toe on something an d tumbles forward.

TOPH
Ow! Crud! I am so sick of not feeling where I'm going! And what idiot buried a boat in the middle of the desert?

KATARA
A boat?

TOPH
Believe me, I kicked it hard enough to feel plenty of vibrations.

Katara gets down on the ground and starts brushing sand away, revealing a sand-sailer abandoned or lost by the Sandbenders.

KATARA
It's one of the gliders the Sandbenders use. And look-

She points to a primitive compass mounted on the front.

KATARA (cont'd)
It's got some kind of compass on it. I bet it can point us out of here. Aang, you can bend a breeze so we can sail it. We're going to make it!

She keeps digging out the sailer, and the others help her. The kids' faces finally show a glimmer of hope.

INT. FLOWER SHOP - NIGHT

Uncle and Zuko walk through a flower shop, guided by Fung.

FUNG
It is an honor to welcome such a high-ranking member of the Order of the White Lotus. Being a grand master, you must know so many secrets.

He looks at Uncle expectantly, who just smiles slyly, enjoying the attention. Zuko fumes.

ZUKO
Now that you've played Pai Sho, are you going to do some flower arranging, or is someone in this club going to offer some real help?

UNCLE
(to Fung)
You must forgive my nephew. He is not an initiate and has little appreciation for the cryptic arts.

They reach a door in the back of the shop. Fung does a secret knock, and the door is opened by a DOORMAN wearing a white robe with an embroidered lotus design.

DOORMAN
Who knocks at the garden gate?

UNCLE
One who has eaten the fruit and tasted its mysteries.

The man bows and steps aside. In the room we see a group of men all wearing similar robes. Zuko starts to follow Fung and Uncle inside, but Uncle stops him.

UNCLE (cont'd)
I'm afraid it's members only. Wait out here.

He closes the door, leaving Zuko standing among the flowers. Zuko looks around to see if anyone is watching then sniffs one and smiles.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

The kids speed along on their sand-sailer, using the compass to guide them as Aang bends wind into their sail. Katara looks concerned.

KATARA
The needle on this compass doesn't seem to be pointing north according to my charts.

Sokka just smiles, enjoying the ride.

SOKKA
Take it easy, little lady. I'm sure the sand folks who built this baby know how to get around here.

As they crest a dune, they see a giant rock mesa directly ahead, looming over the otherwise empty terrain (like Ayer's Rock in the Australian outback).

KATARA
That's what the compass is pointing to: that giant rock. It must be the magnetic center of the desert.

Toph perks up.

TOPH
A rock? Yes! Let's go!

KATARA
Maybe we can find some water there.

Aang darkens.

AANG
Maybe we can find some Sandbenders.

EXT. GIANT ROCK - NIGHT

The kids stand on top of the rock and look around. There's nothing but desert stretching as far as the eye can see in all directions. Toph sighs contentedly and lies down.

TOPH
Ahh. Finally. Solid ground.

She swings her arms and legs around, carving a "rock angel" like a kid making a snow angel in winter. Sokka looks around and takes a deep breath.

SOKKA
I think my head is starting to clear out the cactus juice.
(he looks around)
And look!

He leads them over to a cave-like opening.

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS

As the kids wander through the cave, they see a honey-like goo dripping from the ceiling. Sokka immediately sticks his hand in some and licks it up, then spits it out.

SOKKA
Ew. Tastes like rotten penguin meat. Aww, I feel woozy.

Katara gives him a harsh look.

KATARA
You've been hallucinating on cactus juice all day, and then you just lick something you find stuck to the wall of a cave?

Sokka just shrugs.

SOKKA
I have a natural curiosity.

Toph looks a little uneasy.

TOPH
I don't think this is a normal cave. This was carved by something.

AANG
Yeah, look at the shape.

The cave has taken on a precisely hexagonal shape.

TOPH
There's something buzzing in here. Something that's coming for us.

Now they all hear the buzzing. They run back to the mouth of the cave while the buzzing behind them grows louder. As they reach the outside, where the sun is beginning to rise, they hit the deck and five buzzard-wasps come roaring out of the cave mouth behind them. The buzzard-wasps wheel around, see the kids, then head straight for them!

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

EXT. DESERT ROCK MESA - SUNRISE

As the sun rises overhead, the kids try to fend off the attacking buzzard-wasps. Aang blasts at them with his Airbending to hold them back while Toph wildly fires rocks in the air. One of them lands near Sokka.

SOKKA
What are you doing? That rock almost crushed me!

TOPH
Sorry, I can't tell where they are in the air!

SOKKA
I got this one!

He swings wildly in the air with his club, nowhere near any wasps.

KATARA
Sokka, there's nothing there!

Sokka looks around, confused.

SOKKA
I guess my head's not as clear as I thought.

KATARA
We have to get out of here. I'm completely out of water to bend.

One of the wasps swoops down and grabs Momo and starts to carry him off.

AANG
Momo!

He pulls out his glider.

AANG (cont'd)
I'm not losing anyone else out here!

He takes off after the wasp. Katara grabs the others and pulls them together in a clump.

KATARA
Come on, we're going down.

They start to pick their way down the side of the rock. A buzzard-wasp starts to dive at them. Katara grabs Toph's arm and points it at the attacking wasp.

KATARA (cont'd)
Toph! Shoot a rock right there!
Fire!

Toph fires a rock in the air that smacks the buzzard wasp in the nose, sending it spiralling away, confused but unhurt.

SOKKA
Yeah! You got it!
(turning to Katara, unsure)
She got it, right?

KATARA
Yes. Now let's move.

EXT. SKY - CONTINUOUS

Aang pursues the buzzard-wasp that has Momo. He catches up with it and flies underneath it. Aang flips upside down so that he is facing the stomach of the wasp where Momo is trapped in its claws. Aang Airbends the wasp in the abdomen and it releases Momo, who flies to safety. The wasp turns and flies away from Aang, but Aang flips his glider back over and continues to bear down on the buzzard-wasp, his eyes full of fury. He reaches it again, and in one awesome move he transforms his glider back into a staff and swings it at the wasp, generating a massive Airbending strike which knocks the wasp out of the air and smashes it into the ground in a crumpled heap. Aang turns the staff back into a glider and flies off.

Momo flutters over to Aang and looks at him, freaked out by this violent act, so unlike the usual Aang. Aang, still filled with rage, seems not to notice. He turns around and flies back to the rock. Momo hesitates a moment, then follows.

EXT. ROCK - CONTINUOUS

Katara, Sokka, and Toph are almost down the rock. Katara wheels Toph around at another attacking buzzard-wasp.

KATARA
On your left!

Toph fires another rock that wings the wasp and knocks it away.

Suddenly a whirlwind of sand surrounds them, simultaneously choking them, blocking their view and driving the buzzard-wasps away.

As the sandstorm dies down, the kids turn to see that they have been saved by a group of Sandbenders. Aang catches up with them and lands, glaring angrily at the Sandbenders.

INT. FLOWER SHOP - DAY

Zuko dozes in a chair near the back door. Uncle and Fung come out and Zuko starts awake.

ZUKO
What's going on? Is the club meeting over?

UNCLE
Everything is taken care of. We're heading to Ba Sing Se.

ZUKO
Ba Sing Se? Why would we go to the Earth Kingdom capital?

FUNG
The city is filled with refugees. No one will notice two more.

UNCLE
We can hide in plain sight there, and it's the safest place in the world from the Fire Nation. Even I couldn't break through to the city.

Another MAN rushes in the shop with a handful of papers.

MAN
I have the passports for our guests. But there are two men out on the street looking for them.

They look out the front window and see Xin Fu and Master Yu questioning people on the street, waving wanted posters of Zuko and Uncle.

XIN FU
You see these guys?

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The kids are face to face with a tribe of SANDBENDERS, led by a gruff man named SHA-MO.

Next to him stands his burly son GHASHIUN (seen as SANDBENDER LEADER in episode 210). Ghashiun nervously eyes Toph.

SHA-MO
What are you doing in our land with a Sandbender sailer? From the looks of it you stole it from the Hami tribe.

KATARA
We found the sailer abandoned in the desert. We're traveling with the Avatar.

Sha-Mo looks at Aang, a little impressed.

KATARA (cont'd)
Our bison was stolen and we have to get to Ba Sing Se.

Ghashiun steps forward, overreacting because of his guilt.

GHASHIUN
You dare accuse our people of theft while you ride in on a stolen sand-sailer?

Sha-Mo turns to his son, annoyed.

SHA-MO
Quiet, Ghashiun! No one accused our people of anything. If what they say is true, we must give them hospitality.

GHASHIUN
Sorry, Father.

Toph whispers to the group.

TOPH
I recognize the son's voice. He's the one that stole Appa.

KATARA
Are you sure?

TOPH
I never forget a voice.

Aang steps forward, furious, pointing at Ghashiun.

AANG
You stole Appa! Where is he? What did you do to him?

He's starting to look very threatening, and the Sandbenders take a step back. Sha-Mo looks at his son.

GHASHIUN
They're lying! They're the thieves!

Without hesitation, Aang fires an Airbending strike that destroys one of their sand-sailers. He looks at them, cold.

AANG
Where is my bison?

INT. FLOWER SHOP - DAY

Xin Fu and Master Yu walk in the flower shop, carrying Uncle and Zuko's wanted posters. They both have bumps and bruises from the brawl at the cantina. As they enter, the man who brought Uncle and Zuko's passports pushes a cart out of the shop carrying two giant pots of white lotuses. He stops for a moment, scared. Xin Fu waves the posters at the flower shop proprietor.

XIN FU
Hey, you! Where are these men?

The White Lotus member who opened the door in the earlier scene is behind the counter of the flower shop.

XIN FU (cont'd)
I got a tip that they're in your shop.

DOORMAN
As you can see, no one is here but us.

Doorman nods at the guy pushing the cart, who heads out of the shop. Xin Fu and Master Yu don't seem to notice.

MASTER YU
We know all about your secret back room.
(to Xin Fu)
Kick it down.

Xin Fu winds up.

DOORMAN
Hey! That room's for flowers only!

Xin Fu kicks down the door and leads Master Yu in.

INT. BACKROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is empty except for a white lotus Pai Sho tile on the floor. Master Yu picks it up.

MASTER YU
Some unlucky soul... has an incomplete Pai Sho set.

Xin Fu gives him a withering look and knocks the tile out of his hand.

XIN FU
(FED-UP GROWL) Let's go back to finding the girl.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - DAY

The man from the flower shop stops pushing his cart. He looks around, then knocks on the two giant pots of white lotuses. Zuko and Uncle hop out of the pots. They look around to see if anyone is watching, then wave goodbye to the cart man and hustle down the road.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Aang blasts another sand-sailer to bits. He looks at the Sandbenders, enraged.

AANG
You tell me where he is. Now.

Sha-Mo looks at Ghashiun, who is clearly about to crack.

SHA-MO
What did you do?

GHASHIUN
It wasn't me!

TOPH
You said to put a muzzle on him!

AANG
You muzzled Appa?!

He blasts another sand-sailer and looks like he's about to attack the Sandbenders.

GHASHIUN
I'm sorry! I didn't know it belonged to the Avatar!

AANG
Tell me where Appa is!

GHASHIUN
I traded him to some merchants. He's probably in Ba Sing Se by now. They were going to sell him there.

Aang is totally enraged and his eyes start to glow as he slips into the Avatar state.

GHASHIUN (cont'd)
Please, we'll escort you out of the desert. We'll help however we can!

Aang has stopped listening. The wind starts to whip around him.

SOKKA
Just get out of here! Run!

He grabs Toph and they run to the Sandbenders, leading them away from Aang as a whirlwind whips around him. Katara stays where she is, looking at Aang in all of his Avatar fury. She slowly walks into the whirlwind, bracing herself so as not to be swept away by Aang's rage. She reaches the center, and without saying a word, hugs Aang. Aang continues to glow angrily, but Katara just holds him. Finally, the wind starts to die down.

As the wind stops, Aang closes his glowing eyes and starts to cry.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END